

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 USBERL 01846 01 OF 02 041600Z  
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-14 ACDA-12 TRSE-00 CIAE-00  
COME-00 EB-08 INR-10 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 OMB-01  
DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 L-03 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15  
ICA-20 /117 W  
-----096269 041819Z /46

R 041513Z AUG 78  
FM USMISSION USBERLIN  
TO AMEMBASSY BONN  
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 7418  
AMCONSUL BREMEN  
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF  
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT  
AMCONSUL HAMBURG  
AMCONSUL MUNICH  
AMCONSUL STUTTGART

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 USBERLIN 1846

DEPT PLS PASS DEPT OF LABOR

EO 11652: N/A  
TAGS: ELAB WB  
SUBJECT: STRIKE OF BERLIN'S CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

REF: USBERLIN A-70

SUMMARY: ON AUGUST 2, BERLIN'S ORGANIZED CONSTRUCTION WORKERS  
WENT ON STRIKE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN TWENTY-TWO YEARS IN ORDER  
TO EMPHASIZE THEIR DEMANDS THAT AN ADDITIONAL COLLECTIVE  
BARGAINING AGREEMENT SIGNED FOR WEST GERMANY'S CONSTRUCTION  
WORKERS COVERING TRAVEL ALLOWANCES APPLY IN FULL AND WITHOUT  
RESTRICTION IN BERLIN AS WELL. BERLIN'S CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY  
HAS REJECTED THESE DEMANDS POINTING OUT THAT THE COSTS WOULD BE  
INTOLERABLE FOR THIS BRANCH OF THE ECONOMY WHICH SUFFERED  
A SEVERE CRISIS RECENTLY. END SUMMARY  
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PAGE 02 USBERL 01846 01 OF 02 041600Z

1. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN TWENTY-TWO YEARS BERLIN'S  
CONSTRUCTION UNION, IG BAU, STEINE, ERDEN HAS GONE OUT  
ON STRIKE. IN 1956, BERLIN'S PLASTERERS HAD GONE ON  
STRIKE OVER A TARIFF AGREEMENT FOR PIECE WORK WHICH WAS  
RESOLVED AFTER SEVEN WEEKS. THE PRESENT TARIFF CONFLICT  
BETWEEN BERLIN'S EMPLOYERS AND THE CONSTRUCTION UNION

REPRESENTING APPROXIMATELY 10,000 WORKERS (OUT OF 26,000 EMPLOYED IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY) IS OVER THE UNION'S DEMAND THAT ALL BERLIN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS RECEIVE AN ADDITIONAL DAILY ALLOWANCE OF DM 5.20 (DM 2.20 AS REIMBURSEMENT FOR TRAVEL EXPENSES, AND DM 3.00 FOR TRAVELLING TIME TO THE JOB SITE) AS OF JULY 1, 1978 IN CONFORMITY WITH THE ADDITIONAL AGREEMENT CONCLUDED FOR CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IN THE FRG. THIS WOULD BRING WEST BERLIN'S CONSTRUCTION WORKER IN LINE WITH WAGES AND WORKING CONDITIONS IN THE FRG. THE CONSTRUCTION FEDERATION (FACHGEMEINSCHAFT) AAU) REPRESENTING THE EMPLOYERS, HAS REJECTED THE UNION DEMANDS ARGUING THAT WERE UNION DEMANDS WERE ACCEPTED TOGETHER WITH WAGE AND SALARY INCREASES EARLIER THIS YEAR, THIS WOULD REPRESENT A 16 PERCENT OVERALL INCREASE. THE CONSTRUCTION FEDERATION ALSO POINTED OUT THAT BERLIN'S CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ALREADY EARN UP TO 25 PERCENT MORE THAN THEIR COLLEAGUES IN THE FRG, AND IN ADDITION HAVE TWO OR THREE DAYS MORE ANNUAL LEAVE. AS A COMPROMISE, THE CONSTRUCTION FEDERATION HAS OFFERED TO PAY DM2.20 DAILY FOR TRAVEL EXPENSES AS OF SEPTEMBER 1, TO ALL WORKERS WHO HAD TO TRAVEL A DISTANCE OF MORE THAN 6 KILOMETERS (APPROX. 2.4 MILES) TO THEIR JOB SITE. THE EMPLOYERS REASON THAT A TRAVEL TIME ALLOWANCE WAS HARDLY JUSTIFIED IN BERLIN GIVEN THE RELATIVELY SHORT DISTANCES BETWEEN WORK AND RESIDENCES.

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PAGE 03 USBERL 01846 01 OF 02 041600Z

2. THE CONSTRUCTION UNION IG BAU, STEINE, ERDEN REFUSED TO ACCEPT THE COMPROMISE AND STATED IT WAS CONCERNED WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF THE MATTER, NAMELY, THAT IF BERLIN WAS PART OF THE FRG, ALL AGREEMENTS CONCLUDED IN THE FRG HAD TO APPLY IN FULL IN BERLIN, AND CALLED FOR A DECISION ON A STRIKE BY DIRECT VOTE. ON JULY 27, BARELY 3,000 OF THE 10,000 ORGANIZED UNION MEMBERS FOLLOWED THE CALL TO VOTE, WITH 94.4 PERCENT FAVORING A STRIKE. THE STRIKE, AS CALLED BY IG BAU, AFFECTS BERLIN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ONLY, BUT NOT TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL EMPLOYEES OF CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES, NOR WEST GERMANS WORKING IN BERLIN TO WHOM THE PROVISIONS OF THE ADDITIONAL COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT ALREADY APPLY.

3. THE STRIKE AFFECTS ALL OF BERLIN'S CONSTRUCTION ENTERPRISES, IN PARTICULAR, HOWEVER, MAJOR HIGH RISE CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS (AMONG THEM THE NEW ICC, A NEUKOELLN HOSPITAL), HIGHWAY AND SUBWAY CONSTRUCTION

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PAGE 01 USBERL 01846 02 OF 02 041606Z  
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AMCONSUL FRANKFURT  
AMCONSUL HAMBURG  
AMCONSUL MUNICH  
KRUFHSG/AMCONSUL STUTTGART 0694

UNCLAS SECTION 2 OF 2 USBERLIN 1846

DEPT PLS PASS DEPT OF LABOR

PROGRAMS. THE POSSIBLE EFFECT OF THIS STRIKE ON THE  
COMPLETION DEADLINE FOR BERLIN'S INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS  
CENTER (IDD) NEXT APRIL, 1979 COULD BE SERIOUS. AS OF  
AUGUST 3, MORE THAN 400 OF THE 600 WORKERS AT THAT SITE  
ARE OUT ON STRIKE. A CONTINUATION MIGHT IN FACT MEAN  
THAT ONE DEADLINE MAY NOT BE MET.

4. THE EMPLOYER ORGANIZATION AS WELL AS THE NEWS MEDIA  
FEEL THAT THE RELATIVELY LOW PARTICIPATION OF UNION  
MEMBERS IN THE STRIKE VOTE (BARELY 10 PERCENT OF ALL  
CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IN BERLIN) SIGNALS THAT THE MAJORITY  
OF BERLIN'S CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IS DISINTERESTED IN A  
STRIKE AND RELUCTANT TO GIVE UP A WEEKLY PAY CHECK  
OF DM 680.00 TO 840.00 FOR THE DM 200.00 TO 250.00 PER WEEK  
STRIKE MONEY THEY WILL RECEIVE FOR THE DURATION OF THE  
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PAGE 02 USBERL 01846 02 OF 02 041606Z

STRIKE. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT THE STRIKE WILL COST THE

UNION APPROXIMATELY DM 2.5 MILLION PER WEEK.

5. EMPLOYERS OF BERLIN'S CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY HAVE THREATENED TO RETALIATE WITH A LOCKOUT, BUT WILL WAIT FOR AT LEAST ONE WEEK BEFORE DECIDING ON IT. IT WOULD NOT INCLUDE UNIONIZED CONSTRUCTION WORKERS WHO DID NOT GO OUT ON STRIKE.

6. AFTER THE FIRST DAY OF THE STRIKE, THE PICTURE IS UNCLEAR. CONFLICTING STATEMENTS APPEAR IN THE PRESS.

WHEREAS THE CHAIRMAN OF IG BAY, STEINE, ERDEN, WENER KOCH FELT "THE STRIKE HAS BEGUN QUITE POSITIVELY" AND NOTED THAT 9,000 OF THE 10,000 UNIONIZED EMPLOYEES HAD WALKED OUT. KOCH WAS ALSO PLEASED TO REPORT THAT THE UNION HAS REGISTERED 1,2000 NEW MEMBERS SINCE STRIKE BEGAN. THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EMPLOYER SIDE, ON THE OTHER HAND, ARGUED "THAT FEWER THAN 50 PERCENT OF ALL EMPLOYEES PARTICIPATED IN THE STRIKE ON THE FIRST DAY."

7. THE GENERAL SCENE WAS CALM, WITH NOBODY SEEKING CONFRONTATIONS, KOCH AND TEUFFERT HAVING AGREED TO GET IN TOUCH IMMEDIATELY IF ANY UNFORESEEN INCIDENTS SHOULD OCCUR IN ORDER TO PREVENT AN OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE. AT PRESENT, NO FIGURES ARE AVAILABLE ON HOW EACH SECTION OF THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IS AFFECTED BY THE STRIKE, BUT THE GENERAL INFORMATION SEEMS TO INDICATE THAT THE LARGER A CONSTRUCTION SITE IS, THE MORE UNIFORMLY THE APPEAL TO STRIKE IS FOLLOWED. NOBODY VOLUNTEERS ANY PREDICTIONS AS TO THE LENGTH OF THE STRIKE. SOME FEEL, HOWEVER, THAT ALTHOUGH THERE ARE NO VIOLENT CONFRONTATIONS, FRONTS HAVE HARDENED AND THE STRIKE MAY LAST A

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PAGE 03 USBERL 01846 02 OF 02 041606Z

WHILE. SOME CONSTRUCTION EXPERTS, ON THE OTHER HAND, FEEL THAT THE STRIKE MAY BE SETTLED IN A WEEK'S TIME AFTER 50 PERCENT OF THE UNION DEMANDS HAVE BEEN COMPLIED WITH.

8. COMMENT: THE SECOND ESTIMATE MAY WELL TURN OUT TO BE THE CORRECT ONE IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT THIS PARTICULAR STRIKE IS CHARACTERIZED BY AN APPARENT LACK OF ENTHUSIASM FOR FIGHT. IN ADDITION, THE STRIKE IS NOT ONLY UNPOPULAR WITH THE PRESS, WHICH FEELS THAT AN INDUSTRY SO HEAVILY SUBSIDIZED BY FEDERAL FUNDS CAN ILL AFFORD A STRIKE FOR TRAVEL TIME ALLOWANCES, BUT ALSO WITH FELLOW WORKERS IN RELATED INDUSTRIES WHO HAVE NOTHING TO GAIN BY THE STRIKE, BUT ON THE CONTRARY LOSE WAGES AND DO NOT RECEIVE STRIKE MONEY AS COMPENSATION. THE TWO MAIN OPPONENTS IN THE PRESENT COLLECTIVE BAR-

GAINING CONFLICT SEEM IN NO FIGHTING MOOD EITHER, AND SO FAR HAVE REFRAINED FROM TRADING INSULTS AND ACCUSATIONS, BUT HAVE ATTEMPTED TO STICK TO THEIR RESPECTIVE POSITIONS BY WAY OF OBJECTIVE ARGUMENTS. ALSO, BOTH EMPLOYER AND UNION ARE WELL AWARE OF THE FACT THAT A LONG DRAWN OUT STRIKE WOULD FURTHER WEAKEN BERLIN'S CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY, AND RESULT IN RISING UNEMPLOYMENT. FOR THESE REASONS, IT IS LIKELY THAT THE TWO TARIFF PARTIES WILL FIND A REASONABLE SOLUTION WITHOUT UNDUE DELAY. NELSON

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## Message Attributes

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